**MARK HADDON**

***The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time***

43

Mother died 2 years ago.  
I came home from school one day and no one answered the door, so I went and found the secret key that we keep under a flowerpot behind the kitchen door. I let myself into the house and carried on making the Airfix Sherman Tank model I was building.  
An hour and a half later Father came home from work. He runs a business and he does heating maintenance and boiler repair with a man called Rhodri who is his employee. He knocked on the door of my room and opened it and asked whether I had seen Mother.  
I said that I hadn't seen her and he went downstairs and started making some phone calls. I did not hear what he said.  
Then he came up to my room and said he had to go out for a while and he wasn't sure how long he would be. He said that if I needed anything I should call him on his mobile phone.  
He was away for 2 1/2 hours. When he came back I went downstairs. He was sitting in the kitchen staring out of the back window down the garden to the pond and the corrugated iron fence and the top of the tower of the church on Manstead Street which looks like a castle because it is Norman.  
Father said, 'I'm afraid you won't be seeing your mother for a while.'  
He didn't look at me when he said this. He kept on looking through the window.  
Usually people look at you when they're talking to you. I know that they're working out what I'm thinking, but I can't tell what they're thinking. It is like being in a room with a one-way mirror in a spy film. But this was nice, having Father speak to me but not look at me.  
I said, 'Why not?'  
He waited for a very long time, then he said, 'Your mother has had to go into hospital.'  
'Can we visit her?' I asked, because I like hospitals. I like the uniforms and the machines.  
Father said, 'No.'  
I said, 'Why can't we?'  
And he said, 'She needs rest. She needs to be on her own.'  
I asked, 'Is it a psychiatric hospital?'  
And Father said, 'No. It's an ordinary hospital. She has a problem... a problem with her heart.'  
I said, 'We will need to take food to her,' because I knew that food in hospital was not very good. David from school, he went into hospital to have an operation on his leg to make his calf muscle longer so that he could walk better. And he hated the food, so his mother used to take meals in every day.  
Father waited for a long time again and said, 'I'll take some in to her during the day when you're at school and I'll give it to the doctors and they can give it to your mum, OK?'  
I said, 'But you can't cook.'  
Father put his hands over his face and said, 'Christopher. Look. I'll buy some ready-made stuff from Marks and Spencer's and take those in. She likes those.'  
I said I would make her a Get Well card, because that is what you do for people when they are in hospital.  
Father said he would take it in the next day.

47

On the bus on the way to school next morning we passed 4 red cars in a row which meant that it was a Good Day, so I decided not to be sad about Wellington.  
Mr Jeavons, the psychologist at the school, once asked me why 4 red cars in a row made it a Good Day, and 3 red cars in a row made it a Quite Good Day, and 5 red cars in a row made it a Super Good Day, and why 4 yellow cars in a row made it a Black Day, which is a day when I don't speak to anyone and sit on my own reading books and don't eat my lunch and Take No Risks. He said that I was clearly a very logical person, so he was surprised that I should think like this because it wasn't very logical.  
I said that I liked things to be in a nice order. And one way of things being in a nice order was to be logical. Especially if those things were numbers or an argument. But there were other ways of putting things in a nice orders. And that was why I had Good Days and Black Days. And I said that some people who worked in an office came out of their house in the morning and saw that the sun was shining and it made them feel happy, or they way that it was raining and it made them feel sad, but the only difference was the weather and if they worked in an office the weather didn't have anything to do with whether they had a good day or a bad day.  
I said that when Father got up in the morning he always put his trousers on before he put his socks on and it wasn't logical but he always did it that way, because he liked things in a nice order, too. Also whenever he went upstairs he went up two at a time always starting with his right foot.  
Mr Jeavons said that I was a very clever boy.  
I said that I wasn't clever. I was just noticing how things were, and that wasn't clever. That was just being observant. Being clever was when you looked at how things were and used the evidence to work out something new. Like the universe expanding, or who committed a murder. Or if you see someone's name and you give each letter a value from 1 to 26 (a = 1, b = 2 etc.) and you add the numbers up in your head and you find that it makes a prime number, like Jesus Christ (151), or Scooby Doo (113), or Sherlock Holmes (163), or Doctor Watson (167).  
Mr Jeavons asked me whether this made me feel safe, having things always in a nice order and I said it did.  
Then he asked if I didn't like things changing. And I said I wouldn't mind things changing if I became an astronaut, for example, which is one of the biggest changes you can imagine, apart from being a girl or dying.  
He asked whether I wanted to become an astronaut and I said I did.  
He said it was very difficult to become an astronaut. I said that I knew. You had to become an officer in the air force and you had to take lots of orders and be prepared to kill other human beings, and I couldn't take orders. Also I didn't have 20/20 vision which you needed to be a pilot. But I said that you could still want something that is very unlikely to happen.  
Terry, who is the older brother of Francis, who is at the school, said I would only ever get a job collecting supermarket trollies or cleaning out donkey sh\*t at an animal sanctuary and they didn't let spazzers drive rockets that cost billions of pounds. When I told this to Father he said that Terry was jealous of my being cleverer than him. Which was a stupid thing to think because we weren't in a competition. But Terry is stupid, so quod erat demonstrandom which is Latin for "which is the thing that was going to be proved", which means "thus it is proved".  
I am not a spazzer, which means spastic, not like Francis, who is a spazzer, and even though I probably won't become an astronaut I am going to go to university and study Mathematics, or Physics, or Physics and Mathematics (which is a Joint Honour School), because I like mathematics and physics and I'm very good at them. But Terry won't go to university. Father says Terry is most likely to end up in prison.  
Terry has a tattoo on his arm of a heart-shape with a knife through the middle of it.  
But this is what is called a digression, and now I am going to go back to the fact that it was a Good Day.  
Because it was a Good Day I decided that I would try and find out who killed Wellington because a Good Day is a day for projects and planning things.  
When I said this to Siobhan she said, 'Well, we're meant to be writing stories today, so why don't you write about finding Wellington and going to the police station.'  
And that is when I started writing this.  
And Siobhan said that she would help with the spelling and the grammar and the footnotes.  
  
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Top of Form



Bottom of Form

**Extract**

Extract

**1**

WHEN my mother lay in the small front room of the weather-board house in which we lived, awaiting the arrival of the midwife to deliver me, she could see tall gums tossing in the wind, and a green hill, and cloud shadows racing across the paddocks, and she said to my father, 'It will be a son; it is a man's day.'

My father bent and looked through the window to where the dark, green barrier of the bush stood facing the cleared paddocks.

'I'll make him a bushman and a runner,' he said with determination. 'By God, I will!'

When the midwife arrived he smiled at her and said, 'I thought the little chap would be running around before you got here, Mrs Torrens.'

'Yes, I should have been here half an hour ago,' said Mrs Torrens brusquely. She was a heavy woman with soft, brown cheeks and an assertive manner. 'There was Ted greasing the gig when he should have had the horse in.' She looked at mother. 'How are you, dear? Have you had any pains yet?'

'While she was speaking,' my mother told me, 'I could smell the myall-wood handle of your father's stockwhip hanging on the end of the bed, and I could see you wheeling it round your head at a gallop like your father.'

Father sat in the kitchen with my sisters while I was being born. Mary and Jane wanted a brother to take to school with them, and father had promised them one called Alan.

When Mrs Torrens brought me out for them to see, I was wrapped in red flannelette, and she placed me in father's arms.

'It was funny looking down on you there,' he said. 'My son . . . There was a lot of things I wanted you to be able to do – ride an' that. I wanted you to have good hands on a horse. Well, that's what I was thinking. Running, of course . . . They reckoned you had good limbs on you. It seemed funny, me holding you there. I kept wondering if you would be like me.'

I had not long started school when I contracted Infantile Paralysis. The epidemic that began in Victoria in the early 1900's moved into the country districts from the more populated areas, striking down children on isolated farms and in bush homes. I was the only victim in Turalla, and the people for miles around heard of my illness with a feeling of dread. They associated the word 'Paralysis' with idiocy, and the query 'Have you heard if his mind is affected?' was asked from many a halted buggy, the driver leaning over the wheel for a yarn with a friend met on the road.

For a few weeks the neighbours drove quickly past our house, looking hurriedly, with a new interest, at the old picket fence, the unbroken colts in the stockyard and my tricycle lying on its side by the chaff house. They called their children in earlier, wrapped them more warmly and gazed at them anxiously when they coughed or sneezed.

'It hits you like a blow from God,' said Mr Carter, the baker, who believed that this was so. He was the Superintendent of the Bible Class and proclaimed in his weekly announcements, as he faced his pupils with a sombre look:

'Next Sunday morning at Divine Service the Rev. Walter Robertson, B.A., will offer up prayers for the speedy recovery of this brave boy sorely stricken with a fell disease. A full attendance is requested.'

Father, after hearing of these words, stood in the street one day tugging at his sandy moustache with a nervous, troubled hand, while he explained to Mr Carter just how I happened to catch the disease.

'They say you breathe the germ in,' he said. 'It's just floating about in the air – everywhere. You never know where it is. It must have been just floating past his nose when he breathed in and that was the end of him. He went down like a pole-axed steer. If he'd been breathing out when that germ passed he'd 've been right.'

He paused, then added sadly, 'Now you're praying for him.'

'The back is made for the burden,' murmured the baker piously. He was an elder of the Church and saw the hand of God behind misfortune. On the other hand he suspected the devil of being behind most of the things people enjoyed.

'It's God's will,' he added with some satisfaction, confident the remark would please the Almighty. He was always quick to seize any opportunity to ingratiate himself with God.

Father snorted his contempt of such a philosophy and said, with some savagery, 'That boy's back was never made for the burden, and, let me tell you, this won't be a burden either. If you want to look for burdens, there's the place to look for them.' And he tapped his head with a brown finger.

Later, standing beside my bed, he asked anxiously, 'Have you got any pains in your legs, Alan?'

'No,' I told him. 'They feel dead.'

'Oh, hell!' he exclaimed, his face stricken.

He was a lean man with bowed legs and narrow hips, the result of years in the saddle, for he was a horsebreaker who had come down to Victoria from outback Queensland.

'It was the kids,' he used to say. 'There's no schools outback. Only for them, by cripes, I'd never have left.'

He had a bushman's face, brown and lined, with sharp blue eyes embedded in the wrinkles that came from the glare of saltbush plains.

A drover mate of his, who called in to see him one day, exclaimed, as father crossed the yard to greet him, 'By cripes, Bill, you still walk like a bloody emu!'

His walk was light and mincing, and he always looked at the ground ahead of him as he walked, a habit he attributed to the fact that he came from 'snake country'.

Sometimes, when he had a few drinks in, he would ride into the yard on some half-broken colt and go rearing and plunging amongst the feed boxes, gig shafts, and the remains of old wheels, scattering the squawking fowls and giving high, larrikin yells:

'Wild cattle and no brands! Let them ring! Ho, there!'

Then he would rein the horse back on its haunches and, snatching off his broad-brimmed hat, would swing it round in some mock acknowledgment of applause while he bowed towards the kitchen door where mother generally stood with a little smile upon her face, a smile that was a mixture of amusement, love and concern.

Father was fond of horses, not because they were the means by which he earned his living, but because of some beauty he saw in them. He liked studying a well-built horse. He would walk round it slowly, his head on one side, looking carefully at every feature, running his hands down its front legs, feeling for swellings or scars that would show it had been down.

'You want a horse with good, strong bone, and plenty of daylight under him,' he used to say, 'one that stands over a lot of ground.'

He thought horses were like human beings.

'Yes, it's a fact,' he had said. 'I've seen them. Some horses sulk if you as much as touch 'em with a whip. So do some kids . . . Box their ears and they won't talk to you for days. They hold it against you. They can't forget, see! By hell, it's true of horses too! Use the whip on some of them and you make a jib. Look at the chestnut mare of Old Stumpy Dick's. She's tough in the mouth. And I mouthed her, mind you. It just shows you . . . It's in her like in Stumpy. Whoever mouthed him made a proper mess of it. He still owes me a quid on that job. Well, let it go . . . He's got nothing.'

His father had been a red-headed Yorkshireman, a shepherd, who had migrated to Australia at the beginning of the '40's. He married an Irish girl who arrived at the new colony in the same year. They say he strode onto the wharf when a ship laden with Irish girls seeking work as domestics arrived in the colony.

'Which one of you will marry me, now?' he called out to the girls lining the rail. 'Who'll take a chance with me?'

One strong, blue-eyed colleen with black hair and broad hands eyed him speculatively for a moment, then called back, 'I'm willing. I'll marry you.'

She lowered herself over the ship's side, and he caught her on the wharf. He took the bundle she carried and they walked away together, his hand on her shoulder as if he were guiding her.

Father was the youngest of four children and inherited the temperament of his Irish mother.

'When I was a kid,' he told me once, 'I caught a teamster fair behind the ear with a paddy melon – if the juice gets into your eyes it can blind you, you know. Well, this fellow went sort of half cranky and came at me with a waddy. I made for our hut yelling, 'Mum!' This bloke meant business, mind you – by hell, he did! I had nothing left when I reached the hut. I was done. But mum had seen me coming and there she was waiting with a kettle of boiling water swinging easy in her hand. 'Keep back,' she said. 'This is boiling. Come any closer and I'll let you have it in the face.' By hell! it stopped him. She just stood there with me clinging to her skirts and watched him till he went away.'

Father was earning his own living at twelve. His education had been limited to a few months' schooling under a drunken teacher to whom each child attending the slab hut that served as a school, paid half a crown a week.

After he started work he drifted round from station to station, horsebreaking or droving. His youth and early manhood were spent in the outback areas of New South Wales and Queensland, and it was these areas that furnished the material for all his yarns. Because of his tales, the saltbush plains and red sandhills of the outback were closer to me than the green country where I was born and grew to manhood.

'There's something in the back country,' he once told me. 'You're satisfied out there. You get on a pine ridge and light a fire . ..'

He stopped and sat thinking, looking at me in a troubled way. After a while he said, 'We'll have to think up some way to stop your crutches sinking into the sand outback. Yes, we'll get you up there some day.'

Best I can get at present of an extract fromm Romulus my Father

<http://www.amazon.com/Romulus-My-Father-Raimond-Gaita/dp/1876485175#reader_B005ITUEM2>

Jane Eyre – Charlotte Bronte

Bessie answered not; but ere long, addressing me, she said--"You  
ought to be aware, Miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs.  
Reed: she keeps you: if she were to turn you off, you would have  
to go to the poorhouse."

I had nothing to say to these words: they were not new to me: my  
very first recollections of existence included hints of the same  
kind. This reproach of my dependence had become a vague sing-song  
in my ear: very painful and crushing, but only half intelligible.  
Miss Abbot joined in -

"And you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses  
Reed and Master Reed, because Missis kindly allows you to be brought  
up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will  
have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make  
yourself agreeable to them."

"What we tell you is for your good," added Bessie, in no harsh  
voice, "you should try to be useful and pleasant, then, perhaps, you  
would have a home here; but if you become passionate and rude,  
Missis will send you away, I am sure."

"Besides," said Miss Abbot, "God will punish her: He might strike  
her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go?  
Come, Bessie, we will leave her: I wouldn't have her heart for  
anything. Say your prayers, Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself;  
for if you don't repent, something bad might be permitted to come  
down the chimney and fetch you away."

They went, shutting the door, and locking it behind them.

The red-room was a square chamber, very seldom slept in, I might say  
never, indeed, unless when a chance influx of visitors at Gateshead  
Hall rendered it necessary to turn to account all the accommodation  
it contained: yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers  
in the mansion. A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany,  
hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle  
in the centre; the two large windows, with their blinds always drawn  
down, were half shrouded in festoons and falls of similar drapery;  
the carpet was red; the table at the foot of the bed was covered  
with a crimson cloth; the walls were a soft fawn colour with a blush  
of pink in it; the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of  
darkly polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades  
rose high, and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of  
the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane. Scarcely less  
prominent was an ample cushioned easy-chair near the head of the  
bed, also white, with a footstool before it; and looking, as I  
thought, like a pale throne.

This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent,  
because remote from the nursery and kitchen; solemn, because it was  
known to be so seldom entered. The house-maid alone came here on  
Saturdays, to wipe from the mirrors and the furniture a week's quiet  
dust: and Mrs. Reed herself, at far intervals, visited it to review  
the contents of a certain secret drawer in the wardrobe, where were  
stored divers parchments, her jewel-casket, and a miniature of her  
deceased husband; and in those last words lies the secret of the  
red-room--the spell which kept it so lonely in spite of its  
grandeur.

Mr. Reed had been dead nine years: it was in this chamber he  
breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne  
by the undertaker's men; and, since that day, a sense of dreary  
consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion.

My seat, to which Bessie and the bitter Miss Abbot had left me  
riveted, was a low ottoman near the marble chimney-piece; the bed  
rose before me; to my right hand there was the high, dark wardrobe,  
with subdued, broken reflections varying the gloss of its panels; to  
my left were the muffled windows; a great looking-glass between them  
repeated the vacant majesty of the bed and room. I was not quite  
sure whether they had locked the door; and when I dared move, I got  
up and went to see. Alas! yes: no jail was ever more secure.  
Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated  
glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked  
colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the  
strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms  
specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all  
else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like  
one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening  
stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and  
appearing before the eyes of belated travellers. I returned to my  
stool.

Superstition was with me at that moment; but it was not yet her hour  
for complete victory: my blood was still warm; the mood of the  
revolted slave was still bracing me with its bitter vigour; I had to  
stem a rapid rush of retrospective thought before I quailed to the  
dismal present.

All John Reed's violent tyrannies, all his sisters' proud  
indifference, all his mother's aversion, all the servants'  
partiality, turned up in my disturbed mind like a dark deposit in a  
turbid well. Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always  
accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it  
useless to try to win any one's favour? Eliza, who was headstrong  
and selfish, was respected. Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a  
very acrid spite, a captious and insolent carriage, was universally  
indulged. Her beauty, her pink cheeks and golden curls, seemed to  
give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for  
every fault. John no one thwarted, much less punished; though he  
twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little pea-chicks, set  
the dogs at the sheep, stripped the hothouse vines of their fruit,  
and broke the buds off the choicest plants in the conservatory: he  
called his mother "old girl," too; sometimes reviled her for her  
dark skin, similar to his own; bluntly disregarded her wishes; not  
unfrequently tore and spoiled her silk attire; and he was still "her  
own darling." I dared commit no fault: I strove to fulfil every  
duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking,  
from morning to noon, and from noon to night.